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How different generations contact and search for brands on Social Media? Comparing Gen X and Y

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## **Abstract**

This research intends to examine if there were significant differences on the brand engagement and on the electronic word of mouth (e-WOM)<sup>1</sup> referral intention through Facebook between Generation X and Generation Y (also called millennials). Also, this study intends to examine if there are differences in the motivations that drive these generations to interact with brands through Facebook. Results indicated that Generation Y members consumed more content on Facebook brands' pages than Generation X. Also, they were more likely to have an e-WOM referral intention as well as being more driven by brand affiliation and opportunity seeking. Finally, currently employed individuals were found to contribute with more content than students. This study fills the gap in the literature by addressing how marketing professionals should market their brand and interact and engage with their customers, based on customers' generational cohort.

**Keywords** Facebook, Generational cohorts, Generation Y, Generation X, Brand Engagement, Motivations, e-WOM

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<sup>1</sup> Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is defined as the statements about products or brands (either negative or positive) that are made by potential or current costumers. These statements are made available through the internet (Hennig-Thurau, Qwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004).

## **1. Introduction**

In the past decades, there was a shift of the marketing communication budget from traditional instruments to more digital interactive instruments, such as social media. Through social media, consumers learn about brands, share brands' content and interact with brands (Chappuis, Gaffey, & Parvizi, 2011; Qualman, 2012). Representing a widespread source of information, social media are leading to a change on companies' communication strategies in such a way that today the control of information lies with the customer (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In fact, in the social media era "consumers are brands' storytellers and the new brand ambassadors" (Booth & Matic, 2011, p. 4).

In order to understand the changes that social media brought into marketing communications, we first need to understand what social media is made of. Networking sites, blogs, content communities, discussion boards and chatrooms, rating websites and virtual worlds are what we know now as social media; all of these having the main aim of facilitating user interaction, collaborations and the sharing of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Koch & Richter, 2007; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Given this facilitator role, companies are encouraged to be present in social media. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media also acquired a facilitator role in the interaction between brands and their consumers, as well between consumers. In addition, consumers that use social media to engage with brands, in general, have stronger relationships with those brands than consumers who do not (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2015). Due to this fact, understanding what leads consumers to and how they engage with brands via social media is crucial in the market place environment.

In this respect, the present study focuses on one of the most popular social media, Facebook. Besides being the most commonly known social networking site (SNS)<sup>2</sup> in the world (Nielsen, 2010), it was chosen because it enables identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups, which according Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) are the functional building blocks of every social media. Moreover, brand's fan pages within this SNS allow companies to connect immediately with their customers and potential consumers, being able to provide them with several information. At the same time, brand fans have the chance to like, comment and share brand posts.

Several studies were conducted in order to examine the possible effects in behaviors and attitudes of consumers, according to their generational differences (Eastman & Liu, 2012; Kumar & Lim, 2008; Parment, 2013; Roberts & Manolis, 2000; Strutton, Taylor, & Thompson, 2011; Valkeneers & Vanhoomissen, 2012). For that reason, this study focuses on two different generational cohorts, Generation X (Gen X) and Generation Y (Gen Y). Generational cohort is a segmentation variable that will help to understand what drives a given segment to interact with a brand via Facebook and to determine why a particular segment has a certain type and level of brand engagement on social media.

In summary, this paper has three objectives. Firstly, the study examines what motivates Gen X and Gen Y to use social media – namely Facebook – to interact with brands. Secondly, it looks at brand engagement in Facebook, measuring its level in

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<sup>2</sup> Social Networking Site (SNS) refers to a web-based service “that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

different generational cohorts and investigating if there is a different type of brand engagement (consuming or contributing type) in the two different generations. Finally, this research examines if there is a relevant difference in electronic word of mouth behavior amongst the two generational cohorts. In order to accomplish the study's objectives, the study presents the following questions:

RQ1. Are motivations that drive consumers to interact with brands through Facebook different in Gen X and Gen Y? If so, what are the main drivers for each generational cohort?

RQ2. Do Gen X and Gen Y differ on their type (consumption or contribution of content) and level of brand engagement on social media? If such differences exist, to which extent do they differ?

RQ3. Do Gen X and Gen Y differ regarding the likelihood of spreading electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in social media?

### **Literature Review**

Even though the consumer age is commonly used as a segmentation variable in several academic studies, it does not allow us to understand what actually motivates consumers, neither the reason behind their behavior. Therefore, according to the cohort theory (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Van den Bergh, 2005), by using generational cohorts it would be possible to gain additional understanding as each cohort involves people who were born during a specific period, who have similar experiences, values and priorities which will remain relatively the same during one's life (Meredith, Schewe, & Karlovich, 2002).

This study will follow the Brosdahl and Carpenter (2011) classification of generational cohorts. These authors classified different generational cohorts as Baby

Boomers (born between 1946 and 1960), Generation X (born between 1961 and 1981) and Generation Y (born after 1981). Even though different authors classify Baby Boomers and Generation X differently, these classifications do not differ to a big extent (Markert, 2004). Regarding Generation Y category, there is still no consensus on its beginning and ending. As such, and considering there is little research on individuals whose age is below 17, it only be considered *Gen Yers* older than 16 years old. As a result of differences in values and priorities among the two cohorts, it is expected that the motivations and the way they interact with Facebook will differ as well.

According to Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014), when a consumer interacts with a brand through social media, the individual's main motivations are brand affiliation, investigation, opportunity seeking, conversation and entertainment. However, one limitation of Enginkaya's and Yilaz's study was that the sample consisted essentially of young adults (part of Gen Y), which triggered the question whether motivations are different considering different generational cohorts.

Brand affiliation, one of the motivations stated above, can be defined as the "consumer's motivation to follow a brand on social media because of its congruity with his/her lifestyle, possession desires, preference tendency, and intention to promote it" (Enginkaya & Yılmaz, 2014, p. 5). Literature suggests that young consumers "are more likely to be affected by a status brand's symbolic characteristics, by feelings evoked by the brand and by the degree of congruency between the brand-user's self-image and the brand image." (O'Cass & Frost, 2002, p. 82). Thus, it is expected that brand affiliation motivation would be more visible in Gen Y than in Gen X, which lead us to the formulation of the first hypothesis:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Brand affiliation motivation while interacting with brands through Facebook is higher in Generation Y than in Generation X.

A second point of view is that, being an utilitarian motivation, investigation or information seeking motivation consists of consumers usage of social media by consumers to search for information about a product or brand (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). According to past literature, Gen Y, contrasting with Gen X reveals a higher propensity to search for material online (Strutton *et al.*, 2011) and to seek information through Facebook (Kneidinger, 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Investigation motivation while interacting with brands through Facebook is higher in Generation Y than in Generation X.

Furthermore, opportunity seeking motivation, being also an utilitarian driver represents the benefits consumers might obtain by following a brand (for instance, discounts, promotions, coupons) (Enginkaya & Yılmaz, 2014). The so called “innovative adopters”, a category found to be younger and more educated, are adopting mobile coupons use earlier than the others (Im, 2012; Yi, Fiedler, & Park, 2006). Moreover, Gen Y, also called “Gen Frugal” is suggest to be more cost conscious than other generations, looking for promotions and better deals (Millennial Marketing Production, 2010). Therefore:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Opportunity seeking motivation while interacting with brands through Facebook is higher in Generation Y than in Generation X.

Another important driver is conversation, which represents the role of social media on the consumers’ need to communicate with other consumers and with the brands themselves (Enginkaya & Yılmaz, 2014, p. 5). Important drivers for Gen Y to use social media are socialization, interaction and to experience of a sense of community and



belonging (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). Thus, the fourth hypothesis was formulated:

**H4:** Conversation motivation while interacting with brands through Facebook is higher in Generation Y than in Generation X

Finally, the entertainment driver, reflects the extent to which consumers use brands' Facebook page to have fun. Brand entertainment includes contests, sweepstakes, interactive games, word play and events. Studies suggest older Facebook users are more likely to use the game-based applications of Facebook than younger users (Hayes, van Stolk-Cooke, & Muench, 2015). In addition, according to Wohn and Lee (2013), the main driver for older players to play social network games (SNGs) is reciprocity, i.e. the main driver is the exchange of supporting behavior between players, while younger players' main driver is passing time. Moreover, older users engage more in the mechanics of the games. These can lead to the following hypothesis:

**H5:** Entertainment motivation while interacting with brands through Facebook is higher in the older cohorts than in Generation Y members.

As mentioned above, interaction between customers and between customers and the brand is increasingly taking place in the social media. Therefore, brand engagement is a concept worth looking at. It can be defined as "a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/ object (e.g. a brand) (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011)". According to Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011), the consumer engagement with brand in social media can be distinguished between two types of behavior: on one hand, the behavior of consuming content on SNS, in which consumers watch videos and pictures, read information and reviews and on the other hand, the behavior of contributing in which consumers respond to the content

provided by the brand or other consumers, engaging in conversations and commenting on pictures and videos.

Generation Y members are digital natives, while older cohorts are digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001). Gen Y members, being born in the digital era, actively contribute, share and consume content on social media (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008). Studies suggest that older adults use the “active” features of Facebook, such as Facebook chatting and uploading photos much less than younger users (Hayes *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, Dye (2007) suggests that Gen Y members energetically contribute content and always tend to engage in conversations, which is in accordance with Sago (2010) that suggests Gen Yers are both producers and consumers of information. Still, past studies suggest that college students (part of Gen Y) most of the time simply consume content (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009) instead of creating, just like other generations. Hence, it would be relevant to investigate if there are different behaviors in different generations in what concerning brand engagement (type and level):

**H<sub>6a</sub>:** Members of Generation X consume more content in Facebook brands’ pages than members of Generation Y.

**H<sub>6b</sub>:** Members of Generation Y contribute more in Facebook brands’ pages than members of Generation X.

**H<sub>6c</sub>:** Members of Generation Y have greater overall active online brand engagement in Facebook with brands than members of the older cohort.

WOM is particularly important in the context of this study, since even though there are numerous channels of acquiring customers, those acquired through WOM tend to add more long-term value when compared to customers acquired through other channels (Villanueva, Yoo, & Hanssens, 2008). However, studies suggest that different

generational cohorts spread WOM through different channels. Gen Y uses social media more heavily to spread e-WOM, whereas Gen X is more reliant on email. Regarding Facebook fan page for a specific brand, Gen Y was found to be more likely to spread marketing messages than Gen X (Strutton *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, it would be worthwhile to analyze how different is e-WOM amongst the two generations, i.e. if Gen Y is more likely to engage in e-WOM than its older counterpart.

**H7:** Members of Generation Y have greater e-WOM referral intention through Facebook than members of Generation X.

## **2. Methodology**

### *Respondents*

Facebook users were recruited via social networking news feeds (i.e. Facebook) and through e-mail to complete a fifteen-minute survey containing a series of interaction with brands through Facebook motivations questions and other measures of brand engagement and e-WOM through Facebook, as well as brief demographic section. The survey itself was built using Qualtrics, and was filed out anonymously. This sample comprised Facebook users in Portugal who were born between 1961 and 1999. A total of 332 participants (49,4% female,  $M_{age} = 29,82$ ,  $SD = 9,67$ ) completed the web-based survey.

### *Measures*

The survey consists of 8 items concerning the type of brand engagement through Facebook (4 items concerning the consumption of content and 4 items concerning the contribution of content), 6 items concerning the level of brand engagement through Facebook, 6 focusing on e-WOM referral intention through Facebook and, finally, 14 items regarding the type of motivation to interact with brands via Facebook. Besides these

variables, a brief demographic section requested respondents to report their gender, age, highest degree or level of education, current employment status and the average amount of time spent on Facebook per day. The items of all the variables of this study were based on past literature. However, some modifications were made to best suit this study.

The type of brand engagement - consumption and contribution of content - was measured on a seven-point Likert scale adopted from Tsai' and Men' (2013), in which the authors explore the types of brand engagement. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the items described them. This scale ranged from "Not at all descriptive of me" (1) to "Completely descriptive of me" (7). Secondly, items developed by Campbell and Sands (2014) were adapted and modified to measure the level of brand engagement on Facebook. The items also ranged from "Not at all descriptive of me" (1) to "Completely descriptive of me" (7).

Regarding the measure of e-WOM referral intention through Facebook, items also developed by Campbell and Sands (2014) were adapted and modified to measure the e-WOM referral intention through Facebook, in which the respondents were asked to indicate their likelihood to share a Facebook advertisement with others in certain circumstances. Each item described a circumstance and items ranged from "Very unlikely" (1) to "Very likely" (7). Finally, the motivations that drive customers to interact with brand through Facebook were measured on a seven-point Likert scale adapted from a study of Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014), in which respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with statements about their behavior in relation to brands on social networking sites. The items ranged from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (7).

Before addressing the generational differences, each of the five measures (consuming type of brand engagement, contributing type of brand engagement, level of

brand engagement, e-WOM referral intention and motivations) was tested for reliability. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of each measure shows satisfactory levels of internal consistency as *Table 1* shows. Also, *Table 1* summarizes the variables' measurements and their sources.

*Table 4- Measurements, sources and Cronbach's alpha (To be continued.)*

Variables	Measurements	Sources	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Type of Brand Engagement: Consumption of content</b>	I usually like or follow companies on Facebook.	Tsai and Men (2013)	0.895
	I am always interested in viewing pictures on companies' Facebook pages.		
	I am always interested in reading companies' posts, user comments, or products reviews.		
	I like to watch videos on companies' Facebook pages.		
<b>Type of Brand Engagement: Contribution of content</b>	I usually engage in conversations on companies' Facebook pages (commenting, asking and answering questions).	Tsai and Men (2013)	0.864
	I usually share companies' Facebook posts (videos, audios, pictures, texts) on my own Facebook page.		
	I usually recommend companies' Facebook pages to my Facebook contacts.		
	I usually upload product or brand-related videos, audios, pictures or images.		
<b>Level of Brand Engagement</b>	I like to talk about brands that are advertised on Facebook.	Campbell and Sands (2014)	0.896
	I am always interested in learning more about brands/organizations that are present on Facebook.		
	I would be interested in receiving communications from a brand/organization via Facebook.		
	I accept communications from brands as long as they seek my permission.		
	I am proud to have others know which brands I affiliate with via Facebook.		
	Compared to other people, I closely follow news about brands/organizations.		
<b>e-WOM referral intention</b>	The advertisement offers a discount or coupon for a particular product.	Campbell and Sands (2014)	0.870
	The advertisement is about a product that you think would be useful to someone you know.		
	The advertisement focuses on how easy a product is to use.		
	The advertisement focuses on a specific problem or issue that may be experienced by someone you know.		
	The advertisement focuses on the positive benefits of a product or service.		
	The advertisement mentions how other people are getting good results from a product.		
<b>Brand Affiliation motivation</b>	I generally follow the brands on Facebook that are consistent with my lifestyle.	Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014)	0.898
	On Facebook, I follow some brands that I desire to buy in future, although I cannot afford them right now.		
	I follow brands on Facebook that I buy/consume often.		

*Table 1- Measurements, sources and Cronbachs' Alpha (Continuation.)*

	Promotions and discount campaigns offered on Facebook by the brands generate financial benefits for the customers.		
<b>Opportunity Seeking motivation</b>	By following a brand on Facebook, I can be informed of the discounts and promotions without visiting any stores/shops.  Following brands on Facebook helps me to get information about new offerings.	Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014)	0.865
<b>Conversation motivation</b>	I think Facebook is a very convenient tool for the customers to transmit their opinions, complaints and suggestions to the brands. I think it is possible to communicate instantly with brands on Facebook without any time or space boundaries. Getting into contact with brands is easy through Facebook since it is simple and free,	Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014)	0.878
<b>Entertainment motivation</b>	I like the influential and creative contents on Facebook that were generated by the brands Games and/or videos created by the brands provide opportunity for me to have fun time over Facebook.  I think the entertainment content provided by a brand on Facebook positively influences the customers attitudes and company's image.	Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014)	0.788
<b>Investigation Motivation</b>	I believe that the product related information which can be gathered from Facebook is relatively reliable.  Facebook provides a reliable source of information by enabling a transparent integration between brands and consumers.	Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014)	0.874

### 3. Results

#### *Preliminary analysis*

*Table 2* offers a summary of respondents in function of age and gender and it shows that the proportions of men to women are almost equal in both subgroups. *Table 3* presents the educational levels in the test group.

*Table 5- The test group categorized by gender and age*

Gender	Generational cohort		Total
	Generation Y	Generation X	
Male	110	58	168
Female	119	45	164
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>332</b>

*Table 6- The test group categorized by educational level*

Education	Generational cohort		Total
	Generation Y	Generation X	
Elementary School	1	8	9
High School	75	35	110
Bachelor's Degree	117	39	156
Master's Degree	35	17	52
Doctorate Degree	1	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>332</b>

*A comparison across generations: Generation X and Generation Y*

The data from the questionnaire indicate the extent to which Gen X and Gen Y can be considered significantly different in their motivation to interact with brands through social media, in their brand engagement via Facebook and in their e-WOM intention referral. *Table 4* reports all mean scores, independent-samples t-test results and reliability test results. More positive scores represent more positive or agreeable answers, whereas more negative scores represent more negative or disagreeable answers.

*Table 7- Means, reliability and independent-samples t-test results*

Variable	Gen X	Gen Y	P-value	Cronbach's Alpha
Type of brand engagement				
Consuming type of brand engagement	3.04	3.56	0.002	0.895
Contributing type of brand engagement	2.22	2.02	0.171	0.864
Level of brand engagement	2.71	2.74	0.862	0.896
e-WOM referral intention	3.16	3.79	0.000	0.870
Motivations				
Brand affiliation motivation	3.55	4.23	0.001	0.898
Opportunity seeking motivation	3.85	4.27	0.026	0.865
Conversation motivation	4.52	4.44	0.667	0.878
Entertainment motivation	3.70	3.88	0.297	0.788
Investigation motivation	3.47	3.71	0.184	0.874

Beginning with the Tsai' and Men' scales on the consuming type of engagement, the findings suggest that members of Gen Y consume more brand-related content on Facebook brands' pages compared with members of Gen X ( $M$ 's =3.56 and 3.04 respectively;  $p < .005$ . For instance, millennials are more likely to like or follow companies on Facebook than Gen X members and are more likely to be interested in viewing pictures and watching videos on brands' Facebook pages, reading companies'

posts, user comments, products reviews than their older counterpart. Thus,  $H_{6a}$  was supported. On the other hand, in contrast with  $H_{6a}$ , the hypothesis that Gen X and Gen Y have a different behavior in the contribution of content was not supported since  $p = 0.171$ . Therefore,  $H_{6b}$  was not supported.

In addition, in what concerns the level of brand engagement, there was also not enough statistical evidence to sustain the hypothesis that Gen X and Gen Y have a different level of brand engagement  $H_{6c}$  was not supported. Regarding the scales developed by Campbell and Sands (2014) on the e-WOM referral intention, it was found that members of Gen Y are more likely to share Facebook advertisements with others and, consequently, have higher e-WOM referral intention than members of Gen X ( $M$ 's = 3.79 and 3.16 respectively;  $p < .001$ ) and  $H_7$  was supported. Finally, with the scales of Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014) regarding the motivations to interact with brands via Facebook, two types of motivations were found to play a different role in the different generational cohorts interaction with brands via Facebook. Firstly, findings suggest that brand affiliation drives more strongly members of Gen Y than members of Gen X ( $M$ 's = 4.23 and 3.55 respectively;  $p < .005$ ). Therefore,  $H_1$  was supported.

Moreover, millennials, compared with Gen X members are more likely to be driven by opportunity seeking motivation ( $M$ 's = 4.27 and 3.85 respectively;  $p < .005$ ). Thus,  $H_3$  was supported. Investigation, conversation and entertainment motivations drive the two generations in a similar level. Therefore, the two generational cohorts cannot be considered significantly different regarding these drivers and, consequently,  $H_2$ ,  $H_4$  and  $H_5$  were not supported.

When studying differences between generational cohorts, it is also important to determine the role of other variables such as gender, level of education and employment



status. For that purpose an independent-sample t test was conducted to determine if gender plays an important role on the variables described in *Table 1*, i.e. if individuals of different gender have different behaviors concerning those variables. In addition, one-way ANOVA tests and post-hoc Tukey tests were conducted to identify whether level of education and employment status impact these variables.

Findings suggest that individuals of different gender cannot be considered significantly different in any variable. In contrast, different employment status leads to a different level of contributing brand engagement. Consumers currently employed contribute with more content than students ( $M$ 's =2.31 and 1.83 respectively;  $p < .005$ ). Also, brand affiliation has a different weight according to the employment status. Brand affiliation drives more strongly consumers currently studying than unemployed consumers ( $M$ 's =4.25 and 3.29 respectively;  $p < .01$ ).

Regarding the relationship between different educational levels and the variables mentioned above, only high school, bachelor's degree and master's degree were taken into account in these tests since respondents with elementary school and doctorate degree are underrepresented in the test group. The results suggest that individuals with different educational levels cannot be considered significantly different in any variable.

#### **4. Discussion**

On one hand, some results of the present study support the general hypothesis that states different generational cohorts differ on their behaviors and motivational drivers, being these differences in line with differences suggested in past literature and, therefore, in the formulated hypotheses. On the other hand, other results regarding other variables are not in line with differences found in past studies.

According to expectations based on past literature, Gen Y members consume more content on Facebook brands' pages than Gen X. Also, millennials are more likely to share Facebook advertisements with others which is consistent with Strutton *et al.* (2011) findings. Also, Sago (2010) suggests millennials pay a lot of attention to and attributes significant influence to product messages obtained through social media, which can justify this difference.

Moreover, Gen Y members are more driven by brand affiliation to interact with brands in social media than Gen X, which is in line with O'Cass' and Frost's study. This means millennials are more likely to follow brands on Facebook that are congruent with their lifestyles, as well as to follow brands that they desire to buy in the future, even though right now they do not have the possibility to do so. Also, opportunity seeking motivation is stronger in Gen Y, which means they are more likely to follow a brand on Facebook to be informed of discounts and promotions and to get information about new offerings.

Contrasting to expectations based on past studies, Gen Y and Gen X cannot be considered significantly different on their contribution of content behavior, neither on their level of brand engagement, which is consistent with Lyon's and Kury's study that defends that there is not a direct relationship between generational cohort and other variables. Also contrasting to the expectations, investigation, conversation and entertainment motivations drive the two generations in a similar level, which is in accordance with Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009) that state Gen Y and Gen X do not differ on the purpose of social media use. Both generational cohorts use it to seek information and for leisure or entertainment purposes. Finally, and even though it did not

make part of the hypothesis, an interesting finding was that currently employed individuals contribute with more content than students.

## **5. Managerial Implications**

In this study several drivers to interact with brands on Facebook were analyzed. However, only two can be considered significantly different amongst the two generational cohorts: brand affiliation and opportunity seeking motivations. This might imply that, when targeting millennials, marketers should post content slightly different than when targeting Gen X. On one hand, when targeting Gen Y, the brand should post content that lead *Gen Yers* to think that the post reflects them and expresses their values and their lifestyle or simply reflects who they desire to be. To these ends, the emotional load present in the content posted is crucial. In this way, marketers can take advantage of this type of motivation. Moreover, consumers which have intention to promote the brand usually have a brand affiliation motivation. Thus, since Gen Y typically has this type of motivation, *Gen Yers* might be a mean to reach other generations, namely Gen X and Baby Boomers.

On the other hand, also when targeting *Gen Yers*, brands should post content that inform customers about new offers, “special prices” and discounts given the fact that this generation is considered the most cost-conscious generation. Besides this, as some brands already do, they should give once in a while an extra discount to customers which would present a coupon that can be downloaded on a brand’s Facebook or a discount code in online shopping case. Another important implication is that the number of likes and the number of followers on a brand’s Facebook page and the fan growth rate might be good key performance indicators (KPIs) of brand awareness for Gen Y members, whereas they might be not for Gen X members. In addition to this, as we have concluded, Gen Y consume more content on brand’s Facebook page than Gen X. Consequently, KPIs such

number of likes on images or videos, number of likes in company's written posts of the brand's Facebook webpage and "people who saw post" are good KPIs to measure consuming type of brand engagement and might be more useful in Gen Y.

Finally, *Gen Yers* have a higher e-WOM referral intention when compared with Gen X. Therefore, when targeting millennials, companies should encourage consumers to share a brand Facebook advertisement or posts. Brands can do this in several ways such as creating contests (for example, giveaways<sup>3</sup> and "vote to win" contests), creating Facebook coupons, posting interactive media and creating real-time posts. Number of a brand Facebook posts shares and number of mentions would be good KPIs for Gen Y. It was not found any significant difference among the two generations regarding entertainment, investigation and conversation motivations as well as level of brand engagement and contributing type of engagement. Thus, it might imply that brands could use the same KPIs regarding these variables on both generational cohorts and instigate contribution of content and create similar contents with the above mentioned motivations reflected in the same way.

## **6. Limitations**

Nevertheless, this study entails certain limitations. Firstly, the study only comprised Facebook. Further studies should analyze all leading social media to investigate whether different generational cohorts differ in the same extent in other social media. Secondly, the sample studied was highly-educated, young and Portuguese. The group with a limited education (elementary school) and with degree higher than the Masters' are under-represented in the test group. Given the fact that, for instance, low

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<sup>3</sup> A giveaway is a promotion or a contest in which free gifts or prizes are made available to current and potential clients.

education may lead to motivations that emphasize entertainment rather than information (Hargittai, E. and Hinnant, 2008), it would be noteworthy to analyze these differences with a more heterogeneous sample in terms of educational level. Future research, perhaps utilizing a survey method other than online survey could be done to determine if the same relationships hold for a more ethnically diverse sample and if there are significant differences between these two cohorts. Finally, future research could include Baby Boomers members, which did not take part in this study due to the lack of a significant sample. This cohort is particularly important, as they will continue to spend more money than the other generations.

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